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take part in the dances, although courtship is connected with them. After the dances sexual intercourse is indulged in by the partakers in the festival, each girl choosing for herself a lover for that night among the dancing men.

Nordenskiöld mentions the Choroti as an instance of Indians who have purely profane dances, pointing out that they have special reference to the sexual life. The latter of course is true of some dances; but Nordenskiöld's mistake in regarding the Choroti dances as purely profane is due to the fact that he did not study their customs thoroughly and therefore failed to see the ideas underlying them. In fact, it is clear that the Choroti dances are gradually losing their original magical or religious significance and have a tendency to degenerate into mere amusements, a course of development which we frequently notice with regard to Indian customs. But even the Choroti dances still, in the main, retain their ceremonial character. Thus my Indian informant, an elderly man, told me that when the Indians dance they collect the whole supply of fruit gathered for the occasion in the house of an old man, i.e. a man initiated in the magic art: and *they believe that the dancing will make the fruit abundant* — not only these particular fruits, but those growing in the forest as well. The principle is again the same as in the Mataco dance to promote the growth of the sugar cane and in the Toba dance to make the chañar fruit abundant. As we have seen, the drumming, practised by the Choroti and the Mataco during the »season», has to a certain extent a similar object. That the chanting which accompanies the dances has at the same time for its object to frighten away evil spirits, is evident.

From this point of view it is interesting to compare the ceremonies performed by the Choroti during the »season» and the sexual liberty connected with them with certain »mysteries» of a similar kind practised by some Indian tribes in other parts of South America. Thus the Yurupary ceremonies of the Uaupes Indians in north-western South America present a close analogy to them. Among these tribes also certain mysterious ceremonies, consisting chiefly in dancing, are performed at those seasons of the year when the most important fruits reach maturity. The object of these ceremonies appears to be to influence the spirits which are thought to animate the plants and thus to promote fertility. Many facts show that these spirits are nothing but souls of the dead which have taken up their abode in the trees and plants. Moreover, at these mysteries sexual intercourse is promiscuously indulged in by those

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taking part in them, evidently with a view to propagating the useful plant spirits and giving them an opportunity to enter into the women and to be reborn in human form.[1])

I believe that in the Choroti dances performed during the algaroba season and the sexual licentiousness which forms part of them we have in fact remains of similar mysteries in the Chaco, which for one reason or another have partly lost their original significance, having now at the outset only the general character of joyful harvest festivals.

Again, the great festival dance of the Tobas is the *Nomi* already mentioned. It is performed on all particularly solemn occasions, but especially during the algaroba season. It is the great »carnival» dance of the Tobas. Even some time before the proper season begins the Indians start to dance, believing that by dancing they can accelerate the ripening of the fruits (*niapilák map*), just as the Mataco and the Choroti believe that they can hurry on the ripening of the fruits and the coming of the season by beating drums. In dancing the Indians arrange themselves in a long line, or so as to form a crescent. With arms interlaced round each other's waists they move, running alternately to the right and to the left and at the same time forwards to the other end of the dancing place where the chain is broken. Thereupon they move back in the same way. As is customary in the Chaco, the dancers themselves chant the measure of their steps in a loud voice. Similarly the women do not take part in the dance although they are allowed to be present as onlookers. — During the season the dance goes on daily and is believed to influence continually the growth of the fruits.

But the *Nomi* dance is performed during the algaroba season with another object in view also. The Tobas believe that at this happy and joyful time they receive invisible guests in great numbers. These are the *kadeɲakál* or *iláh*, i.e. the spirits of departed Toba Indians, who also want to be present at the joyful festivals and to take part in the drinking-bouts. But these guests, who are feared or at any rate awake uncanny feelings in the living, are not welcome and do not receive any sort of cult. On the contrary, measures are taken to keep them off, and the Indians told me that precisely this is part of the object of the dance *Nomi*. The dancing men by means of their movements and their loud chanting prevent the spirits of the dead from approaching the villages or the place where the drinking and feasting goes on.

[1]) See my *Civilization of the South American Indians*, pp. 427 sqq.